

When Does the Hebrew Day Begin?

Anytime I find a Babylonian calendar practice also used by the Jews, I become immediately suspicious that it was something adopted from the Babylonians when the Jews were in captivity. This is true of the sighted crescent moon to begin the month as well as the naming of the months after Babylonian pagan deities.

The reckoning of a day from sunrise to sunrise is another feature of Babylonian chronology. Pliny wrote:

“The Babylonians count the period between the two sunrises, the Athenians that between the two sunsets, the Umbrians from midday to midday, the common people everywhere from dawn to dark, the Roman priests and the authorities who fixed the official day, and also the Egyptians and Hipparchus, the period from midnight to midnight”

During New Testament times, it can be easily shown that the Jews reckoned the day as from sunset to sunset the following day. However, let's go back to the beginning and look at the creation story.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning Elohim created the heaven and the earth.

Gen 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of Elohim moved upon the face of the waters.

Gen 1:3 And Elohim said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Gen 1:4 And Elohim saw the light, that it was good: and Elohim divided the light from the darkness.

Gen 1:5 And Elohim called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

We read Gen. 1:1-5, that the creation began in darkness. YHWH's creation was completed in 6 days and He rested on the 7th day, which He called The Sabbath. The earth was in existence in verse 2 as the spirit hovered over the face of the waters. It was “tohu v bohu” – a desolation and empty. It was desolate and empty at this point, but it did exist. The earth was created on the first day which began in darkness.

In verse 3 above, YHWH simply commanded “Light Be!” and light was. I cannot prove it and this is pure speculation, but I believe that Yahshua emanated from the bosom of the Father at this point. There was no sun yet created to give forth light. Besides, the word for light in Gen 1:3 is Ore (אור). You will notice light here is spelled with a Vav whereas the light from the sun in verses 14-17 is spelled without the “vav”. The vav pictures a “nail” and Rabbis claim it represents the Messiah. If we look at this word in the ancient pictographic Hebrew, we see it depicted like this (אור). The alef or ox head represents the Father, the Vav is the Messiah and Resh is man. The vav is the mediator between the Father and man.

In verse 4, YHWH divided the light from the darkness. This was done by the bringing forth of light. Darkness is simply the absence of light. YHWH called the light day and the darkness night.

Some will argue that since “day and night” is used to designate a 24 hour period, this proves the day begins at sunrise. However, it proves no such thing as there are other

scriptures where the expression “night and day” is also used to express a 24 hour period. (See 1Sa 25:16; 1Ki 8:29; Est 4:16; Isa 27:3; Isa 34:10; Jer 14:17; Mar 4:27; Mar 5:5; Luk 2:37; Act 20:31; 1Th 2:9; 3:10; 2Th 3:8; 1Ti 5:5 and 2Ti 1:3.)

The phrase “day and night” appears in many verses, but this in no way proves that the day begins at sunrise any more than the phrase “night and day” proves the day begins at sundown. This is a moot point.

In Gen 1:5 we are told that YHWH called the light day and the darkness night. Then He states that evening and morning are the first day. All He is doing here is reaffirming that evening is when darkness starts and morning is when light begins. It doesn't mean that only the evening and the morning are considered one day. How about mid morning and mid afternoon?

The phrase “there came to be (hayah) evening” and “there came to be (hayah) morning” the first day, would prove that the evening came first on the first day.

Consider the following verses.

Lev 23:27 Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto YHWH.

Lev 23:28 And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before YHWH your Elohim.

Lev 23:29 For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.

Lev 23:30 And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.

Lev 23:31 Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Lev 23:32 It shall be unto you a Sabbath of rest, **and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even**, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.

The ninth day at evening (sundown), you begin to afflict your souls until the following evening at sundown (10th). This is one complete day which began at sundown of the 9th and ended at sundown of the 10th.

Exo 12:18 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month **at even**, ye shall eat unleavened bread, **until the one and twentieth day of the month at even**.

Exo 12:19 **Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses**: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.

Compare with these verses:

Lev 23:6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto YHWH: **seven days ye must eat unleavened bread**.

Lev 23:7 In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

Lev 23:8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto YHWH seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

We see in Exo 12:18 that in the evening (sundown) of the 14th of Abiv, we begin to eat only unleavened bread for a period of 7 days. In Lev 23:6, we see that on the 15th of Abiv, we eat only unleavened bread for the same period of 7 days. This is the same period of time. The first day of Unleavened Bread began in the evening of the 14th and lasted for 7

days until the evening of the 21st. You can get out your calendar and mark off the days to prove it to yourselves. The day begins at sundown and ends at sundown of the following day. It's obvious that if the Day of Atonement begins at sundown and ends at sundown, all the days surrounding it must also begin and end in the same manner.

Now bear with me on the following:

Jer 17:21 Thus saith YHWH; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;

Jer 17:22 Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.

Jer 17:23 But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.

Jer 17:24 And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith YHWH, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein;

Jer 17:25 Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain forever.

Jer 17:26 And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of YHWH.

Jer 17:27 But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

They were instructed to do no work or bear any burden through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath. If they wouldn't listen, YHWH said He would burn the place down. So, here is what Nehemiah did when he saw the Sabbath being profaned:

Neh 13:15 In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals.

Neh 13:16 There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

Neh 13:17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?

Neh 13:18 Did not your fathers thus, and did not our Elohim bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.

So, remembering the words YHWH had spoken to Jeremiah, Nehemiah began to shut the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath and kept shut until the Sabbath was over.

Neh 13:19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem **began to be dark before the Sabbath,** I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath; and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the Sabbath day.

There is no question that the gates were shut just prior to sundown and the beginning of the Sabbath as "tsalal" which comes from the root word "tselem" means to shade or darken. This means "the evening shadows". There are no shadows after sundown. The gates to Jerusalem were always shut at night, so why would Nehemiah give special instructions to make sure the gates were shut before sundown, when the Sabbath would begin? The answer is obvious.

There are numerous New Testament evidences that we will now look at.

Joh 20:1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

Here we see it was still dark on the first day of the week when Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. If the day had started a sunrise, this wouldn't make sense. It would be like she wasted all day Sunday and only went to the tomb early before Monday morning, the second day of the week. The conclusion is that the first day of the week had already begun before sunrise.

Mat 28:1 In the **end of the Sabbath**, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

This was after the Sabbath, which concluded at sundown, and was toward the dawn of the first day of the week. The sun had not risen, so dawn was not yet. This is just saying it was toward dawn of the first day of the week which began at sundown after the Sabbath.

Mar 16:1 And when **the Sabbath was past**, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

Mar 16:2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

As soon as the Sabbath was over, the women went to buy spices to anoint his body. They could only do this after sundown at the end of the Sabbath. And very early in the morning which was already the first day of the week, they came to the sepulcher. The Sabbath had already passed.

Luk 24:1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them

We know by John and the other scriptures above that the Sabbath had ended and they came to the sepulcher very early in the morning. Nothing here indicates that they day began at dawn. To the contrary, all evidence indicates that it began at sunset.

One last example from the Tanakh:

Jdg 14:12 And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:

Jdg 14:13 But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

Jdg 14:14 And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.

Jdg 14:15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so?

Jdg 14:16 And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?

Jdg 14:17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass **on the seventh day**, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.

*Jdg 14:18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day **before the sun went down**, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.*

If they had not come to him with the answer to the riddle before the sun went down on the 7th day, it would have begun the 8th day and they would have lost the bet.

There are so many winds of doctrine out there that one has to be careful lest he be seduced into believing them. Anyone can present a good argument and say it can't be any other way, but a closer examination of scripture will often show this is not always the case. There has been nothing I have seen in all the arguments to convince me that the scriptural day starts at dawn. In fact, just the knowledge that Babylon and Egypt also began their days at dawn tips me off that it is not likely that YHWH would have anything to do with the Babylonian way of reckoning of when a day begins. Their ways are not His ways.

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